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MISSISSIPPI Star

VOL. 3 NO. 4 DECEMBER 1998

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PUBLISHER'S PAGE

by Vonretta Singleton

As Christmas nears, memories of the past flash through my mind, and I reflect on good times as well as bad times. I often think about how happy we were to receive bags of goodies from my maternal grandmother. These goodies consisted of oranges, apples, tangerines and all types of fruits and Christmas candy. It didn't take much to satisfy us. We didn't have much, so we never expected too much. Sure, I made my list to Santa each year in hopes of getting that favorite toy, but I didn't always recieve what I wanted. I just figured Santa was trying to tell me that I needed to try harder to be a better person. And I was okay with that.

Growing up in the 1960's for me in my hometown was not the kind of life that made me feel hopeful that Santa had anything in that big red bag for me or my family. But we had each other, and we would get together with our relatives and friends and have a big feast. Even though we often feared for our lives because of hatred, we prayed together, cried together and supported one another.

We had obstacles, but Christmas then was very real. People laugh at me when I say how much I love to hear Nat King Cole, James Brown and Aretha Franklin's Christmas songs from back in the 60's. You could really feel the spirit of Christmas with their voices singing so merrily.

Now that many of us - blacks and whites - have learned to communicate and understand each other better, I hope we can bring back that real feeling

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Mississippi Star

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of Christmas by truly caring for one another. We all have the power to show God that we are glad that he sent Jesus to save our souls; that each day we are living on this earth we will praise him by being kind to others, genuinely caring about them by helping them. And help can be delivered in many ways. You can talk to someone and help them to feel better. You can visit the sick more often. You can invite someone for a meal or take them a meal. And the list goes on and on. Money is not the answer. Doing things for each other and continuously striving for peace and harmony is.

Bring back old traditions and teach children the true meaning of Christmas. I wish all of you a joyous and spirit-filled Christmas and a safe and happy holiday season.

LETTER

Dear Maurice,

To be so far from home because my husband is serving his country, it is really great to read and hear about something from home. The Star makes our tour in Germany easier.

Petrina Curtis
Germany

Tell Us What You Think About

MISSISSIPPI *Star*

Express your point of view in a letter.

Letters to the Publisher

should be 100 words or less.

Star Calendar: Events of interest to South Mississippians should be submitted on your organization's letterhead, specifying the date, time, place of event and a number of contact. Submissions should be received by the twentieth day of the preceding month.

Be sure to include a daytime telephone number.

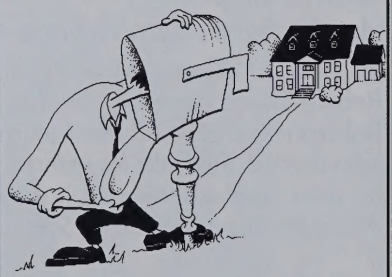
Mail submissions to

Mississippi Star, P.O. Box 2651, Bay St. Louis, MS 39521.

Mississippi Star reserves the right to refuse or decline to publish any submission.

Mississippi Star makes a great gift for Mississippians serving our country overseas!

Fill Out and Return the Application on Page 32!



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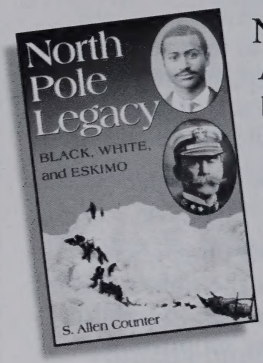
BOOKS

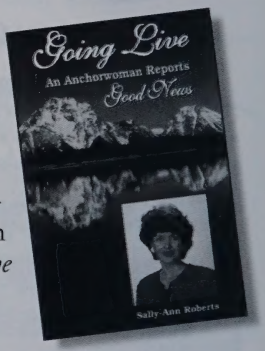
Mississippi Star CHRISTMAS GIFT BOOK SUGGESTIONS



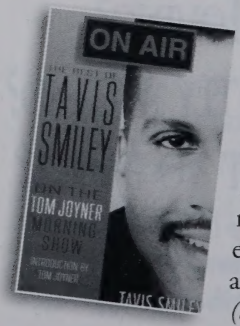
NORTH POLE LEGACY: *Black, White and Eskimo*

by Dr. S. Allen Counter, a neuroscientist, explorer and Director of The Harvard Foundation, tells his story of finding descendants of the men who discovered the North Pole. Dr. Counter traveled to the northernmost points of Greenland and located Matthew Henson and Robert Peary's eighty year old sons, Anaukaq Henson and Kali Peary. *(See Eric Labat's review in the July 1998 issue of Mississippi Star.)*

GOING LIVE: *An Anchorwoman Reports Good News*



by New Orleans television personality, Sally Ann Roberts is one of those gifts that "keeps on giving." Roberts takes her readers on a journey of everyday miracles that we often take for granted. Her stories are rich in spirit and empowering. *(See the review in the November issue of Mississippi Star.)*



ON AIR: *The Best of Tavis Smiley on the Tom Joyner Morning Show*

is a collection of insightful essays by the host of BET Tonight. Smiley comes straight and clear with what's right and wrong with solutions to improve, if not correct the wrongs in our society. Smile informs and enlightens and he provides solid support to take your argument to the office or wherever the issues may arise. *(See review in the June 1998 issue of Mississippi Star.)*

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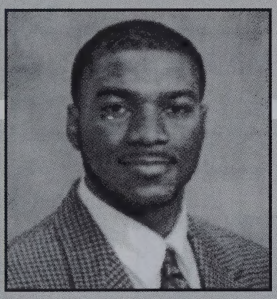

Shannon Garrett
Loan Officer
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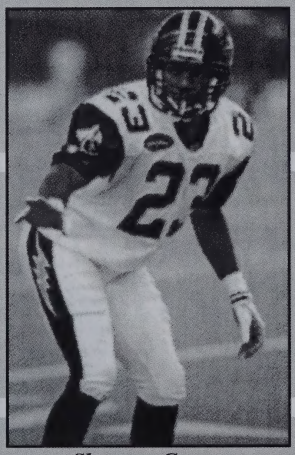
Six months out of the year Shannon Garrett is a loan officer at our Gulfport Branch. The other six months he is a defensive back for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

At the Peoples Bank, we have been putting people first for 100 years. In Shannon's case that means holding his job for him while he plays football in Canada each year.

The next time you're in our Gulfport Branch, be sure to say hi to Shannon and wish him luck in the upcoming season!



Shannon Garrett
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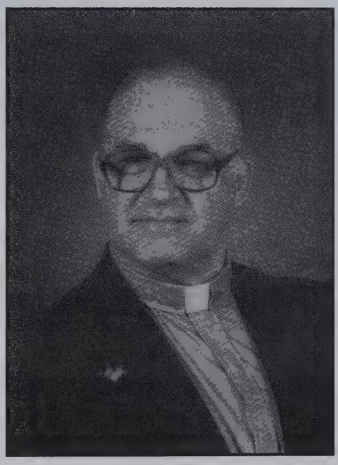
"This day is born for you a Savior!"

THE MESSAGE GIVEN BY THE ANGELS ON THE FIRST CHRISTMAS 1987 YEARS AGO.

by Fr. A. Francis Theriault, S.V.D.



Of all the feasts and holidays that we celebrate throughout the year, there is none that we enter into more completely than Christmas. There certainly is no other feast which touches our lives so closely, so warmly. We feel closeness and warmth because everything, every person, every detail is so fully within the range of our everyday life, our understanding and our own experience.

On a dark cold night, similar to this very night and many such nights in December and January, we meet ordinary people. Mary, a newly married young woman about to be a mother. Joseph, the young man concerned about his family, especially his pregnant wife, looking for a place for his wife to stay, and anxious about her condition. Even the stable or cave is not all that unusual for that part of the world. People have been known to seek shelter in sheds and caves.

The shepherds, regular working men... doing their job, watching their sheep on the hillsides around the city of Bethlehem.

Yes. The great events of Christ's Birth are set in the ordinary, common everyday events of life, birth, shelter and common things that touch our everyday lives.

This closeness and warmth is even more touching as we read about the God of the old testament, the God in the

Burning Bush, the God of Mount Sinai, who appeared amid thunder and lightning giving humankind the Ten Commandments - a God mighty in power has come to us as a child, a little helpless baby, so approachable, so much like us.

This story touches all. The young are joyful to see the Great God as a tiny baby so near to themselves. Older folks marvel at this small baby. How so great a God hid His Divinity, made Himself so humanly approachable.

We all, as we look into the stable at the crib, at the infant lying there and our prayer is:

O GREAT GOD,
HOW SMALL YOU ARE;
O LITTLE BABY
HOW GREAT YOU ARE!

The wonderful part about the Christmas story is that it grows on you. The marvel of it all is that not one detail happened by accident. It all happened by plan and according to the divine plan that was foretold centuries before it ever took place. Yes, Jesus Christ picked every last detail deliberately.

He chose the lowly cattle shed for his shelter rather than a nice warm palace. He preferred the outskirts of a little country town, rather than the heart of a big city. Yes, when you look into the stable, as you meditate on this beautiful Nativity story...Remember our infant, God and King, picked every single detail and did so deliberately. And as we repeat in the Creed, He did it "For us and for our salvation." When you look into the crib and or meditate on this beautiful Nativity scene, you will be forced to exclaim: **O GREAT GOD, HOW SMALL YOU ARE. O LITTLE BABY... HOW GREAT YOU ARE!**

Holidays are about Happiness and Family

Celebrate Responsibly!

❄

MISSISSIPPI *Star*

❄

Have a Safe and Happy Holidays!

Gulf Coast Dental Center *Gulfport, MS*	Hudson & Smith, Attorneys *Gulfport, MS*	F.E.B. Distributing Company, Inc. *Gulfport, MS*
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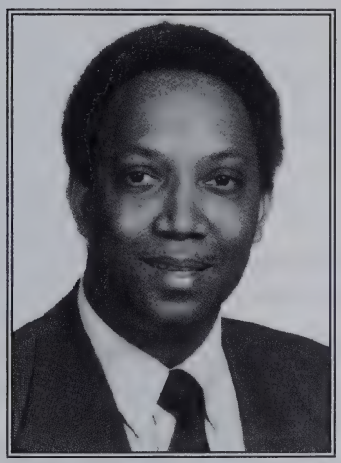
Year End Financial Planning $trategies

by Dr. Roderick Posey



As we come to the end of the year and think of holiday festivities, family gatherings, and New Year's resolutions, it will greatly help our pocketbooks for the coming year if we do a little tax planning. As most accountants know, there is a lot more that can be done to lower our tax bill before December 31 than can be done afterward. Hence, if you take a little time to do some end of the year tax planning now, you will enjoy the benefits well into the next year.

One of the most suggested year-end tax moves is to shift income into next year. For example, a local businessman shifts income by taking vacations the last week of December and not billing clients until January. He's happy while on vacation and income from year-end receivables is shifted to the next year. He will have the money in January of 1999 but will not have to file the income on his tax return until the year 2000.

Another often used end of year tax planning tool is to pay deductible expenses in December. You could pay your property taxes before the end of the year or make a charitable contribution before December 31. These expenditures will reduce your 1998 taxable income when your return is filed next year. If you wait until January to make these payments, you won't get the benefit from these payments until you file in the year 2000.

One of the biggest income shifting tools is your retirement plan. Contributions made to a qualified retirement plan or an IRA are deducted now (you can even use this tool up until you file your return in 1999). These contributions are not taxed until your retirement. Depending on how far away your retirement date is, this technique could shift income well into the next century.

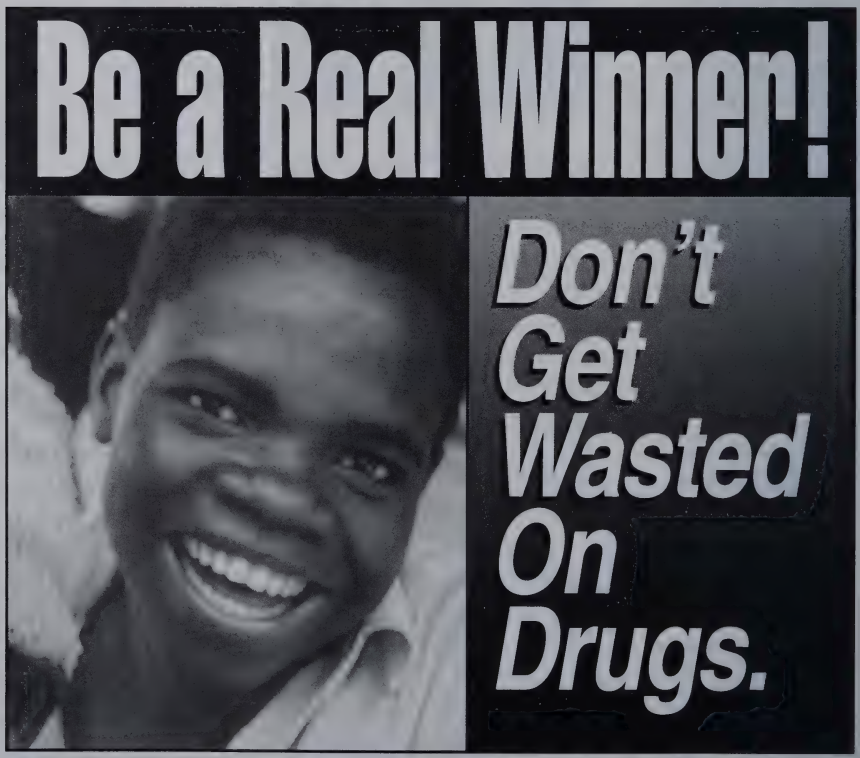
The IRS Restructuring and Reform Act in 1998 has provided another tax planning opportunity for individuals who own shares of stock.

The IRS Restructuring and Reform Act lowered the holding period for long-term capital gains from 18 months to 12 months. The maximum tax rate on long-term capital gains is 20% versus the 39.6% tax on short-term capital gains. If you have sold stock during the year, check now to see if you have gains or losses on your stock sells. You can offset up to $3,000 in capital gains with capital losses. If you have losses, you could sell some shares with gains. Selling those shares will yield some additional funds and not add to your tax bill to the extent the gains are covered by losses.

You will need a Social Security Number for all dependents on your return. Now would be a good time to complete Form SS-5 for babies born in 1998. You can request the form by calling (800)-TAX-FORM.

Of course, as with any matter as complicated as taxes, you will want to check with your own tax advisor to see how these planning opportunities relate to your situation. After you have spent a little time saving money through tax planning, you can certainly go out and have a happy holiday and look forward to a happy new year.

Dr. Roderick Posey is the associate dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.



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Campus

Lori Jean Jackson

of Jackson reigns as campus queen at Jackson State University for the 1998-99 academic year. A speech pathology major, she was elected Miss Jackson State University in a spring campus-wide election. Miss Jackson is the daughter of Mr. George T. Jackson and Mrs. Emma J. Jackson.

La'Quanta Watson

reigned as the University of Southern Mississippi homecoming queen in November. La'Quanta is a senior psychology major. She is from Hazlehurt, Mississippi and is the daughter of Otis and Matilda Watson.

Queens

Nieasha Parker

was crowned Miss Mississippi Valley State University on October 15, 1998. Miss Parker is a senior biology major plans to further her education and become an occupational therapist, specializing in pediatrics. She is the daughter of Ora Parker of Indianola and the late Gerald O. Parker Sr.

Jennifer Renée Page

is Miss Alcorn State University. The senior Broadcast Communication and English double major from Itta Bena, Mississippi plans to work toward advanced degrees in communications and English Literature and she aspires to become a college professor. Jennifer is the daughter of Mickey and Lucy Page.

Tamiko M. Whitfield

of Hattiesburg reigned as Mississippi State University's 1998 homecoming queen. A senior education major, she was elected by the student body and is the first African American to hold the title. Tamiko is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Wilson.

Essay Contest

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS & SENIORS

THEME:

I Am One Piece of a Big Puzzle Called Life in this World

TWO PRIZES: $100 Savings Bond

Winning Essays will be published in March 1999 Issue of Mississippi Star.

CONTEST RULES: Essays should be 250-300 words in length and must be typed (double spaced). All entries must be received by February 15,1999 at the following address:

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Maria M. Moman, M.D.
OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

A Special Gift

by Maurice E. Singleton Jr.

Shirelle Stewart has always been serious about her future. She graduated with honors from Pass Christian High School and then attended the University of South Alabama in Mobile. At age nineteen, Shirelle enjoyed being a college student, as she balanced an active academic and social schedule. Everything was pretty much going according to the plan she had mapped out for herself.

Planning and organizing came fairly naturally to Shirelle. A diabetic since the age of three, Shirelle was one who seemed to take nothing for granted. Everyday she checked her blood sugars and injected insulin as prescribed around her classes and extra-curricular activities, just as she had always done. To her, diabetes and treatment came with the proverbial territory. She certainly wasn't going to let it slow her down. She had made plans and set goals. She looked to the future with eagerness.

When her vision began to fail, her doctor informed her that she would need a kidney transplant by the time she was twenty-five years of age. At the age of twenty, hearing that was tough for the junior in college, who appeared to have control of her future. But she viewed the doctor's news as a temporary setback, and she was hopeful that she would overcome this just as she had overcome other obstacles.

The mother and daughter have learned a lot together from their surgeries, related testing and Shirelle's diabetese.

Things are getting back to normal for Shirelle as she does more around the house and visits her doctors less often and the doses and number of medications decrease.

A second opinion confirmed that Shirelle would indeed need a kidney transplant, but the time-frame differed significantly from the first information. Instead of by age twenty-five, the second doctor advised that her right kidney was failing, and he recommended that she get the transplant as soon as possible, which could possibly result in reversing her vision loss and preventing degradation of other organs.

In November of 1996, Shirelle began dialysis three times a week. Members of her family would take her to a dialysis center in Bay St. Louis. But Shirelle didn't do well there, primarily because the environment was depressing to the young, vibrant young lady who was accustomed to overcoming obstacles. Being around very sick patients who were regulars at the dialysis center was uncomfortable for her. So, in December she began using a dialysis home system.

Being able to do the dialysis at home was the answer, and this approach even got better as Shirelle eventually began an all night dialysis system which she did up until early July of this year. The all night system allowed Shirelle to take courses at Gulf Coast Community College while she waited for a a new kidney.

Several relatives were tested for donor compatibility, and four or five members of her family where shown to be suitable donors. The list of donors included her sister Chantel Babb, and her mother, Portia Stewart. Her dad, Robert Stewart was not even considered because he has high blood pressure.

Once the donors were identified, Shirelle's doctor was ready for her to

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What should I do?
Perform monthly self-examinations, and make sure your doctor gives you a breast examination once a year. Mammography can detect breast cancer up to two years before you or your doctor can feel a lump. So, once you turn 40, have a mammogram every year.

For more information or a physician referral call:
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undergo the transplant. He felt that the sooner she had the new kidney the better their chances were to maintain the vitality of her organs.

Chantel had recently married and had just started a new job as a teacher at Pass Christian Middle School. So, Portia agreed to donate a kidney to her daughter.

Shirelle enjoys getting back to doing things she enjoys like playing the piano.

"We couldn't put Chantel through that," explained Portia. "She had just started a job at Pass Middle School. I was the obvious choice."

Even after Portia made the decision to be the donor, she wasn't sure if she would go through with the surgery to be a donor.

"It's a big responsibility," explained Portia. "I talked with my sister in Washington, D.C. She asked me if I was really going to do it. I told her that I really didn't know yet. And she said, you know, you really shouldn't put that pressure on her. She's probably feeling guilty. She thinks that she's putting you through so much. She said you need to stop teasing her. Either you're going to do it or you're not going to do it. Tell her straight up. I told my sister that I would think about what she said."

What was delaying Portia's decision was not fear of the surgery or the loss of a vital organ. She was concerned about what would happen to other members of her family. "It's a big decision just knowing that so much revolves around me. It's my house and these are my kids. I keep the house going. I am the one who does the grocery shopping."

"I am the one who prepares the meals. And Ryan (Portia's teenage son) also has diabetes," she explained. "He is macho. He thinks that he can do whatever. He thinks that he doesn't have to stay on his diet and that he doesn't have to do his blood sugars. And I was thinking, who would take care of him. Who would be a donor for him?

"Then I made up my mind. If it's going to make a difference in her life, I will do it," explained Portia.

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Portia and Shirelle had their surgeries on July 9, 1998 at the University of Alabama Medical Center in Birmingham. Both surgeries were successful. In addition to giving up a kidney, one of Portia's ribs was removed in order to allow access for the surgeons to remove the kidney. This is one of issues that generates humor in an otherwise very serious situation.

"I asked them what they did with my rib," said Portia. "They told me that they gave it to the cat."

"One man wore his rib on a string around his neck," said Shirelle.

A sense of humor appears to be healthy to the healing process.

"What I really like about her is she is a trooper," said Portia. "She doesn't let anything stop her. She's always laughing; she's always happy. No matter how sick she's been, she never complained. Unless she is complaining about your cooking.

"Even in high school with the diabetes, it never stopped her from doing what she wanted to do. She was in ballet. She graduated with honors."

Shirelle's future appears to be back on track. Since her surgery in July, she sees the doctor less often and the number of pills she takes each day continues to decrease.

"I can look forward and plan things," said Shirelle of the progress she has made with her new kidney. "I can go stay at my sister's over night. I can walk down to my grandmother's or go to a movie and stay out all night if I want to. It has given me a lot more freedom. Now I can project into the future. Now it's time for me to start living my life again."

Shirelle looks forward to going back to college to finish her degree. She wants to do so much in her life. She understands that she has limitations, but she is hopeful that everything is going to work out just fine. However, she appears to be somewhat cautious with her expectations.

"I don't know what's in the future," explained Shirelle. "Diabetes is a progressive disease. I don't drive. If I want to go to the store to get a piece of gum or something - I'll just use that as an example - I can't do that. I'll have to wait for someone to take me."

And what changes has her mother seen in Shirelle since the surgery?

"She's happier. She's more content. She's making plans. Before, she had plans, but it was like everything was on hold. She knows what she wants to do, and she's really excited about everything.

"We are very intuned to God and he makes a difference in everything," said Portia. "It's very scary when they put you to sleep. You give it to him, and you understand that he makes a way. He has power, and he does all things. And you just have to believe that he can, and he will, and he does."

And what does Shirelle say about their special bond.

"It is a special bond that we have," said Shirelle. "There is actually part of her in me. Sometimes it's overwhelming to think about it. She actually gave me life twice."

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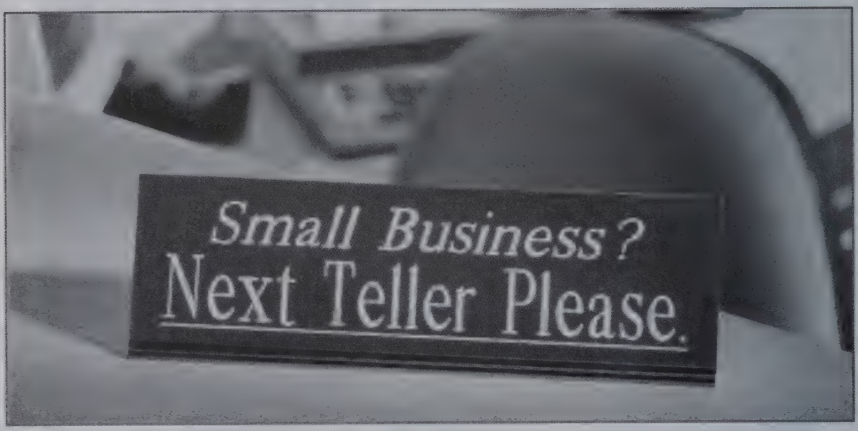

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Michael Marks

In August of this year, as rookie pro football players took to the field with contracts worth millions, rookie teachers entered the classroom with contracts worth as little as $18,000 per year. We Americans know how to attact top talent to the sports arena. Isn't it time we applied some of that marketplace magic to a challenge that really matters: recruiting top quality teachers.

No, I'm not advocating seven figure salaries for teachers. But something is seriously askew when, for example, first-year teachers in California are paid thousands of dollars less than novice prison guards. Or when low salaries mean that school districts must resort to hiring marginally qualified people to staff their classrooms.

Over 43 percent of teachers in some Mississippi school districts are not fully certified in the subjects they teach. And this scarcity of qualified candidates stands to worsen as a tidal wave of teacher retirements creates a need for two million new teachers over the next decade.

Traditionally, idealistic young people have counted on the "psychic rewards" of teaching to compensate for poor pay. But even if new teachers are willing to rationalize their substandard salaries, the truth is that low teacher pay comes at a very high cost.

New teachers find that those "psychic rewards" are often fleeting and in any case are not legal tender when it comes to making car payments. Not surprisingly, 20 percent of new public school teachers leave the classroom by the end of their first year. Almost half leave within five years.

The problem of attracting - and retaining - qualified prospects is especially acute in the fields of math and

science, where newly minted college graduates can easily command two or three times the salary of a starting teacher. In part because low salaries fail to lure enough qualified teachers, some 28 percent of high school math teachers and 55 percent of high school physics teachers have neither a major nor a minor in their subjects.

Or consider the uproar this summer in Massachusetts, where 59 percent of prospective teachers flunked a controversial entry-level exam. John Siber, chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education, led the chorus of state officails who claimed to be "shocked" by the failure rate. This is the John Siber who said recently, "I don't see why a garbage collector shouldn't be paid more than a teacher. It's a very unattractive job, whereas teaching is very attractive."

Meanwhile, the July 27 issue of Forbes Magazine bizarrely implied that teacher salaries are too high. Bear in mnd, this is the same Forbes that annually lists and lionizes the world's 200 richest people (none worth less that $1.5 billion). And the larger irony is that Forbes - which defends extravagant CEO salaries as necessary to attract top talent - fails to see the obvious: to attract more of the best into teaching public schools need salaries that are literally "attractive."

Are high-quality teachers worth the extra dollars? Think of the impact that talented teachers had on your life. Or consider the just-released Education Trust Report spotlighting the dramatic difference that effective teachers can make in student performance. The study found that in Texas, for example, teacher quality - "measured by education, experience and test scores on initial licensing exams" - accounted for 43 percent of the variance in student achievement.

Fortunately, many elected officials are starting to "get it." Maryland's school superintendent, Nancey Grasmick, recenly proposed offering state income tax credits to new teachers. For more than a decade, progressive governors across the South have aggressively raised teacher salaries in order to attract and retain higher quality teachers. Unfortunately, Mississippi salaries have not even kept pace with the Southeast Region.

It is time to get serious about school quality - beginning with the guarantee of a qualified teacher in every classroom. To that end, I support the testing of new teachers, and I'd require all future high school teachers to have a college major in the subjects they teach. But let's not kid ourselves. In teaching as in any profession, it is hypocritical - and futile - to demand top quality unless we are willing to pay for it.

Michael Marks is a 22-year educator and is presently serving in his second year as president of the state's largest teacher group, The Mississippi Association of Educators.

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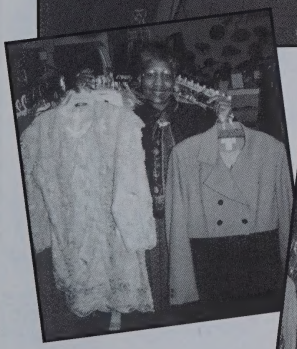

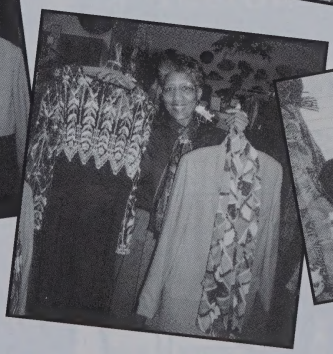

During the last week in October Ethel Shaw of Fashion Touch Boutique went on a buyers shopping trip to New York City. Over the course of four days she went to market for sportswear, evening wear, suits and fashion accessories for ladies. And she did not forget about the men. The following photographs capture a few of the many new styles that Ethel picked up on her New York buying mission.

These photographs include some of the items that Ethel picked up in New York. Take a look and stop by Fashion Touch Boutique on Watkins, one block west of Cowan Road near Pass Road.

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DECEMBER 26

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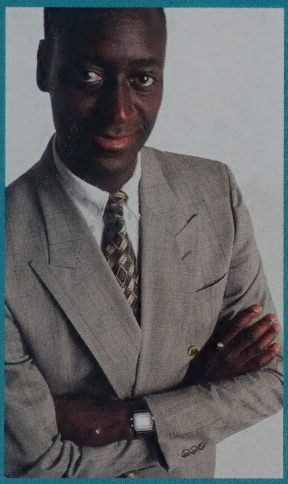

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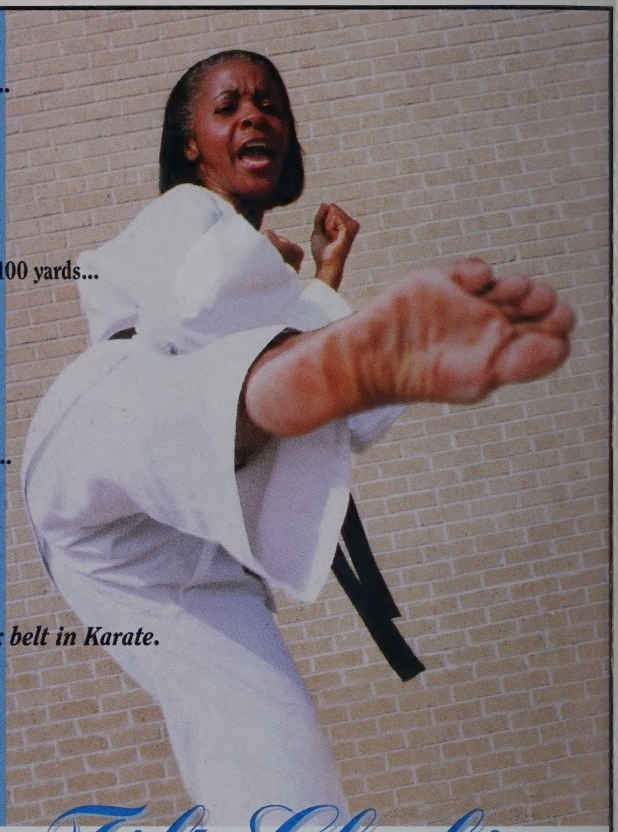

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